

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG134 – What You Give Can Make a Miracle

Welcome to the podcast today. I am wanting to talk about the Feast of Purim. This, to me, is one of the most tremendous events in the Scriptures; and it is one of the funnest times to remember and celebrate the events that transpired in the book of Esther, which ends up being referred to as the Feast of Esther, or, Purim. I want to title this, *What You Give Can Make a Miracle*. One of the things that is always so interesting to me about the time of Purim, the book of Esther, and what transpires in those Scriptures, is how amazingly miraculous the events are that transpire. I mean, we are talking about the saving of the Jewish people. If it were not for the events of this book, there would be no Jews today; they would have been annihilated during the time of Esther, and during the events of this story. So we have the salvation of the Jewish people. It comes through stories that are, as I said, so miraculous, in one sense, because of what is accomplished; but also, they happen very simply, in a sense, through human actions and interventions that do not seem to be miraculous, or do not seem to be initiated by the divine.

You do not find the name of God in the book of Esther – He is very much behind the scenes in what seems to be taking place, and you can almost get lost in that fact. In some ways, people thought that maybe this book should not be included in the Hebrew Scriptures, because of the fact that it was not talking about God. But it is talking about a very real aspect of God, and of our walks with the Lord; and that is, during my day at least, that God is invisible. It is very easy to go through the events of our lives, our walks with God and times when we are in need of His help, and He doesn't seem to be visibly there, physically there. Things do not seem to transpire solely by His hand and through miraculous events, if you will. And that is one of the things that just impresses me about the book of Esther – it is so relatable. It's so relatable, and yet, at the same time, as I have said, what is accomplished in the book of Esther in the salvation of the Jewish people is tremendous. It also shows us many things about spiritual warfare and how the spirit world works; about how wickedness works, and how goodness overcomes that.

There are so many aspects, so many ways you can approach the telling of this story, the covering of these Scriptures, the teaching of the lessons that are in here; they are endless. What I want to do in this podcast is to approach the simplistic aspect, the very human aspect of the story; not even talking that much about the story, but using other Scriptures, in fact, to show us that what we have, and what we can give, many times is that which God uses to perform a miracle, or to accomplish His will in the earth, and to move us from point A to point B, closer to His Kingdom. I will start by touching on the aspect of the book of Esther that brings about what I am interested in, as far as this teaching is concerned.

I am going to start at Esther the second chapter, verses 21-3:1. It says, "In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. Now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence. After these events King Ahasuerus promoted Haman." This part of it is interesting, because he doesn't promote Mordecai, even though Mordecai just saved his life. Instead, he promotes Haman, this Agagite, into the position of authority right off of his right hand,

giving him his signet ring and giving him power to rule. So you would think, “Well, here Mordecai does this great thing. He saves the life of the king, and the king should reward him.” But remember, the king is always kind of representative of God, and God’s actions, in the book of Esther. And isn’t it interesting how Mordecai does this great thing, he saves the king, and yet the king doesn’t recognize him, doesn’t seem to thank him? But whoever is keeping the records of the kingdom does write the story in the Chronicles in the King’s presence, and that becomes important as we go along.

What we have here is Mordecai. Mordecai is just being himself. He is being a man of integrity, he is living a life of integrity. He, of course, is working with Queen Esther all through the story to bring her into the kingdom to be the queen. And yet, in simplicity, he is just walking in righteous integrity that he lived out being a Jew, and he is not doing anything special. The fact that he reported this plot against the king cannot be seen as some tremendous thing that no one else would do; it was just him doing the right thing. And so, that is part of this story. We see that sometimes doing the right thing is huge in God. It is huge in God’s ability to use us and to move His Kingdom forward, His will forward on the earth. And that is really what we see that is happening here and begins to unfold in this story.

So the story goes along, and we are all the way down into chapter 6, and much is happening. Haman has exposed his wickedness and his hatefulness. Mordecai has made him mad because he won’t bow down to him and serve him and do obeisance to him as he is demanding, because Mordecai is not an idolator. He is a Jew who serves only God. And so, Haman gets so infuriated that he is ready to destroy and annihilate the entire Jewish population of the world at the time. This plot of Haman to destroy the Jews unfolds as we go through these chapters. And as I said, I am not going to go into all of that with this podcast; what I do want to do is pick up at chapter 6, starting with verse 1. It says, “During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.” You know, sometimes you can’t sleep. What do you do? Turn on the light, read a good book. Hopefully the book will put you to sleep, right? So that is what the king is doing. He can’t sleep, so he calls for the record keeper to bring the Chronicles of the Kingdom in, and they are read to him. He probably is laying in bed hoping he falls asleep. But in the process of this reading, in verse 2, it says, “It was found written that Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.” So the king is reminded of this story, that Mordecai reported the plot to kill him, and really saved his life. You would think it would have been more meaningful to him when it happened, but it really catches his attention now, and he starts asking, “Look, what in the world did we do for this guy Mordecai, because he saved my life?” And they said, “Well, you didn’t do anything for him, King.” And so the king sets about to correct that. Well, into the court walks Haman. And so, the king decides that he is going to use Haman to honor Mordecai. How exasperating that was to him we know, because he is set to kill Mordecai. He hates Mordecai. Mordecai won’t bow down to him, won’t serve him, won’t honor him – and now, all of a sudden, the king is going to make Haman honor Mordecai and put on this big presentation, honoring him, putting his robe on him, having him ride on his horse, and doing all of these things. It is not exactly what Haman was planning for that day, but it ends up being what happens; and it just makes Haman more infuriated with Mordecai and with what is going on here.

So, what we see, as the story unfolds, is that Mordecai now comes to the attention of the king. And we know that Queen Esther is honored because she is the queen, and Mordecai is the one who brought her, and all of this. And so, in very natural circumstances, she fasts and prays and is able to enter in to the king, and she sets up this banquet and does all of these intriguing little things. It is really a neat story that is going along. But all in the process of it, it is going to be the exposure and the destruction of

Haman in the end of it. And, in fact, at the end of the story, Haman is hung, and the Jewish people are saved. They are able to fight for their own lives. And again, like I said, sometimes you are looking for this miraculous, divine intervention from God, and it doesn't happen. God just says, "No, defend yourself," and they do. So all of these events, again, are rooted in the fact that Mordecai simply did the right thing. He was simply living a moral, good life, and he reported the plot to the king. But at the right time, it came before the king, and the king used it and moved upon it, his actions in the events that he reported, and this ends up being the foundation of this miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people – and the establishing of Mordecai, in fact, which probably should have happened in chapter 2, as the one wearing the signet ring of the king and being in charge of the kingdom directly under the king.

Finally, things are righted, and it all comes into place. So the story here, think about it: all that took place, all that transpired, really happened because of the simple actions of Mordecai being who he was, as a Jew living according to the principles of God and doing what he would do as himself. He wasn't trying to do anything special. So where I want to take this is hopefully becoming obvious to you; and that is that we in many ways live our lives the same way. Many times, because we are looking for miraculous things to happen, or we are looking for divine intervention, we think that it has to take place in a certain way, or happen through certain events, or whatever; and many times, it just doesn't work that way. It works through the simplicity of our actions and our motivations and our moral compass that we are living.

So I want to read 1 Corinthians 15:57-58. It says, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And that is what we see in this story, is that thanks be to God, He opened these doors and the Jewish people were saved. And so, I like the fact that Paul starts this with, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And he says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

I think that many times we, as believers, are doing those things we feel the Lord is leading us to do. We are trying to live a moral life. We are trying to raise family. We are trying to act in certain ways in our jobs and our cultures and our societies that reflect what we believe is the way God wants us to live. And so, we are just doing, like Mordecai, what seems right for us to do and to be as believers. And Paul adds in here, and he says, "Listen, know that your toil is not in vain." Certainly, what Mordecai did, in the beginning, it did not like anything was going to come out of it. He saves the life of the king, so what? But it was not in vain that he saved the life of the king. And in fact, the fact that he did save the life of the king opened the door for Mordecai and Esther, along with the king's backing, to save Israel, to save the Jewish people. So his toil was not in vain.

I just want to break something loose that should be a part of our hearts and our, I don't know, maybe an experience we should have during the Feast of Purim as we celebrate it – that we clear our vision a little bit and recognize, "Hey, what we are doing, how we are living, what we are attempting to be as believers, as Christians living a life to God, it's not in vain." And maybe it takes a long time. Maybe we don't see any result out of it. But at some point, there is going to be a result of what we have done, what God has led us to do, what He has told us to do. Because that is part of it, isn't it? We get a direction from the Lord in our lives of where to go, what to do, and you follow that. And it seems like, "Gosh, nothing came out of that. Did I miss the Lord's leading? Did I not accomplish what I was supposed to in the Lord?" But Paul is saying, "Look, it's not in vain. Just wait. The Lord is going to use it." What you have, what you are, has the ability to make a miracle. What we give, what we do with our

hands, what actions we take, can be what God uses down the road to perform a miracle. And that, to me, should be part of the lesson of celebrating this Purim.

I want to look at John the sixth chapter, because I think we have another example here. And there are just simple stories that show us the truth of this. John 6:5-9: "Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?' This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. Philip answered Him, 'Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.' One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?'" What can that provide? How can that be the answer for all of these that are coming? And in verses 10-14, "Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down.' Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. When they were filled, He said to His disciples, 'Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.' So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.'"

Here we have this young lad that is among the group, and the Lord is asking the disciples, "Look, what do we do to feed these? Where are you going to go buy bread?" And this young lad comes up and he offers what he has. And what he has is nothing. It is way too little. It doesn't even begin to answer the need that is out there for God. But he brings what he has in his hand, and he offers it to the Lord. Just very simple, a very simple act, which is very natural, very human, giving, natural level. How does this natural level ever in our minds produce the miracle that God needs to see happen – that we need, that the world needs to see happen? And yet, here is the example of it. What this young man had in his hand, he gave to the Lord; he did what he could do. He, again, was a young Jewish boy who was giving because he was taught that lesson. And in his giving, what he gave was able to, in the hands of the Lord, create a miracle. And that is what we should understand. Again, it is a lesson that we should learn from Purim. It is a lesson that we should understand every day, that the little things that we do, they may seem insignificant; they may seem like after we have done them, after we have offered them, they are certainly not enough; and yet the Lord can take it and create a miracle.

In Exodus, the fourth chapter, we see Moses speaking with the Lord. God is getting ready to send him to Egypt and talk to Pharaoh, and Moses said, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"

This is Exodus 4:1-4. "The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.' Then He said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. But the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail'—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand." And we know that as we follow the story of Exodus and the delivery of the children of Israel out of Egypt, that little staff that was in Moses' hand performed more miracles than you can imagine, and certainly than most of us have seen in our lifetime. The power of the miracles, the splitting of the Red Sea, the turning of the river into blood, many things transpired by that simple staff that Moses had in his hand. When the Lord said, "Look, what do you have?" "Well, I have this staff," and presenting that to the Lord, it became the miraculous power through God that was able to deliver Israel out of Egypt. So what we have may seem like nothing. It may seem like a dead staff. But you put it in God's hands and it becomes a powerful element to bring about the miracle deliverance that He is looking for.

There is another story in Second Kings the fourth chapter. It starts in verse 1 and goes down through verse 7. There is a certain woman, a wife of the sons of the prophets, and she is crying out to Elisha. She says, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.’ Elisha said to her, ‘What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?’ And she said, ‘Your maid servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.’ Then he said, ‘Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few. And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full.’ So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, ‘Bring me another vessel.’ And he said to her, ‘There is not one vessel more.’ And the oil stopped. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, ‘Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.’” There was so much there – not only was it able to pay the debts, it was also able to support them on through their lives. What an amazing thing! I love the wording of it: “What do you have in your house?” She goes, “I don’t have anything. There’s nothing. Oh, there’s this little oil,” you know. I wish we knew exactly how much oil it was. But anyway, she just had this little vial of oil, and out of that, the man of God created a miracle that saved her life, saved her sons from slavery, and supported her through the rest of her life.

What do you have therefore? What is in your hand that you can bring to the Lord? Mordecai did a very simple act: he simply reported what he knew was wrong. It was just an act of honesty. And all of these that we have read about, Moses, the prophet’s wife, they simply brought what they had. The young lad coming before the Lord with the little basket. I wonder how many people who knew what was going on around the Lord were laughing at this kid, like, “What are you doing bringing this to the Lord? That’s ridiculous!” But it was that which he could give through which the Lord made miracles. And I just have a feeling, in getting ready this word as the Lord was making it real to me, I just feel like there are so many people out there; you are doing things, and there is this lie that comes through that says, “What you are doing is vain. It is not going to produce anything. It is not going to accomplish anything for you or the Lord or the Kingdom.” And that’s a lie. Whatever you have, how small it may seem, if it is brought before the Lord, if it is given to Him, He will create the miracle. Your labor is not in vain. Your life is not in vain. Your gift is not in vain. Exercise it. Bring it to Him. Let Him create the miracle.

In ending this, I just want to say, don’t despise what you have to offer – it is enough for God to perform miracles. Always remember that, no matter how difficult it seems, your toil is not in vain. Go ahead, give the Lord your loaves, your oil. Let Him create the miracle. Have the faith He can do it. Do your part. It is more important to the Kingdom than you can imagine. What you have, what you are, what you are doing, is more important to the creation and building of God’s Kingdom than you can imagine. Because it isn’t what we are; it is our faith in bringing what we have, and letting Him be the one that performs the miracle.

I bless this. I bless this time of Purim. Let it be a reminder to us that our labor is not in vain, and the little that we have can be the source of a miracle in God’s hands. Amen.